

# HEALING OUR SPIRIT WORLDWIDE

## THE FIFTH GATHERING 2006

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HEALING OUR SPIRIT WORLDWIDE



The Healing Our Spirit Worldwide movement began as one person's vision to create an international forum and movement focused on the alcohol and drug abuse issues and programs in Indigenous communities throughout the global community. Maggie Hodgson, a Carriere First Nation woman, began her lobbying efforts with the International Congress on Alcohol and Addictions (ICAA) and the World Health Organization in the late 1980s. In 1990, the ICAA included a special track on Indigenous addictions issues at their Berlin Conference. Attended by Indigenous peoples of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, this forum led to a discussion that became the foundation for an international healing movement.

Plans for this event began in 1991 with conference hosts Nechi Institute on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Education and the National Native Association of Treatment Directors inviting the National Association for Native American Children of Alcoholics as co-hosts. The event was named Healing Our Spirit Worldwide. The first gathering in Edmonton, in 1992, attracted 3,300 people from seventeen countries of the world. This began the celebration of our successes, programs and stories. The second gathering was held in Sydney, Australia in 1994, the third in Rotorua, Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 1998. These Healing Our Spirit Worldwide events were a cultural and spiritual movement celebrating the tenacity and resilience of Indigenous peoples around the world in the struggle against alcohol and drug abuse. The fourth gathering of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide, held in Albuquerque, New Mexico in September 2002, expanded the vision with the inclusion of health and governance issues in relation to alcohol and drug abuse.

Aboriginal people from Canada met during the 2002 Healing Our Spirit Worldwide Conference and selected Chief Austin Bear from Saskatchewan, Allen Benson and Maggie Hodgson from Alberta, and Rod Jeffries from Ontario to lead Canada in the planning and implementation of the Fifth Gathering. As a result, the International Indigenous Council for Healing Our Spirit Worldwide was formed. This new organization has several major goals including

- ✱ the planning and implementation of the 2006 Gathering,
- ✱ international outreach with Indigenous people of developing countries,
- ✱ continuing the work of the 2002 Covenant,
- ✱ international research collaborations and
- ✱ an international voice for Indigenous peoples healing and health issues and programs.

The Fifth Gathering of Healing Our Spirit will be held in Edmonton, Alberta from August 6-11, 2006.

No history of the world's Indigenous people is complete without including the struggle against alcohol and drug abuse, other addictions and related issues. More important are the healing movements Indigenous people have created to rebuild individuals, families, communities and nations from the tragic effects of cultural oppression and alcohol and drug abuse. The Fifth Gathering of Healing Our Spirit Worldwide will tell the story of this growing momentum from around the world. The 2006 Gathering is being planned as a celebration of the health and healing of Indigenous peoples around the world. The Gathering will be a testament of the resilience, courage, tenacity and the will of Indigenous peoples everywhere to overcome the barriers to achieving self-determination in health and healing. Paramount to the Gathering's success is the inclusion of governance issues related to health and healing. Planned, as an integral component of the Conference, are special sessions for Indigenous leadership on political action and involvement to ensure self-determination includes health and healing. The Healing Our Spirit Worldwide movement is adamant that health and healing is a necessity for self-determination to be achieved. The 2002 Gathering was the first to include governance issues. Resulting from this Gathering came the Covenant, a document that can be used at many levels to promote and ensure health and healing be given a more prominent place in the everyday life of Indigenous peoples around the world.

The Covenant states:

We convene as Indigenous Peoples at the 4<sup>th</sup> HOSW gathering to provide a forum for understanding, discussion, and bringing to international attention existing policies on substance abuse treatment and prevention, and to unite in developing Indigenous models to heal our Peoples.

**Preamble:** We, the Indigenous Peoples placed on Mother Earth as a gift from the Creator, have gathered in a combined voice in the last two decades to unite in the preservation and protection of our human rights, and to acknowledge and promote our responsibility of stewardship of our homelands. We now gather at the 4<sup>th</sup> HOSW to address the spread

of disease and substance abuse, and unite in our efforts to develop Indigenous models of healing for our families and our nations.

**Declaration:** We, the Indigenous Peoples of the world have come to the 4<sup>th</sup> HOSW Gathering to affirm our rights to live our lives in the traditional ways of our ancestors through respect, integrity, and honor, and to prepare our nations for the next Seven Generations.

The human rights of all Indigenous Peoples, including in particular our right of self-determination, shall be recognized and respected in accordance with international law. As such, our rights are inalienable and not subject to extinguishments or termination by any domestic, foreign, or international laws.

The past Gatherings included tracks and workshops in the following areas:

- \* Prevention and treatment of addictions
- \* Residential school issues and healing
- \* Overcoming cultural oppression and colonialism
- \* Trauma and shame
- \* Public health systems and disease prevention
- \* Indigenous cultures, arts and medicines
- \* Spirituality health and healing
- \* Governance and self-determination issues and challenges in health and healing
- \* Research, evaluation and training
- \* Indigenous children and families
- \* Impact of the drug wars and wars on Indigenous populations
- \* Sexuality, sexual abuse and abuse prevention
- \* Elder tracks

- ✱ Youth healing tracks
- ✱ Mental health and wellness

Many participants from past Gatherings have felt the experience of attending was a “life changing experience.” Comments from participants include:

“The spirit of our people was alive at this conference.”

“The conference is a celebration of who we are.”

“I wish all our people were here to experience this remarkable event.”

“The conference sobered me up.”

“Our culture and spirituality made the conference.”

“We need to celebrate like this everyday.”

Many organizations and communities will be included in the planning and implementation of the 2006 Gathering. A Gathering of this magnitude (a goal of 5000 people) requires the involvement of many people and many partnerships. It is with this principle that the International Indigenous Council for Healing Our Spirit World is planning the Conference.

For further information and updates on the Fifth Gathering go to [www.healingourspiritworldwide.com](http://www.healingourspiritworldwide.com).

